

Notes about Evaluation and Data Issues

In reviewing the data collected, we noticed a few areas where we needed to exercise caution in interpreting the data. As further work in FCE progresses, we can refine the evaluation design to eliminate these confusing areas. The evaluation questionnaires should be simplified and streamlined. According to several WIC staff members, the Spanish language versions especially needed to be at a lower level of literacy.

In general, some participants were confused by some questions and were not able to give clear answers. For example:

- We asked participants to check their 2 favorite activities from a list, but many chose more than two.
- We asked participants to indicate how useful the class was for their children, but it was not clear whether they should answer this question if they did not bring any children. It appeared that some participants who did not bring children answered the question anyway; a few respondents explained: “if I had brought them.”

Educator evaluations and participant evaluations should be revised to ask similar questions in a way that can be compared, where appropriate.

- In various different questions, we asked respondents to characterize how “useful”, “valuable” or “enjoyable” the classes were. In future evaluations, a consistent characteristic such as “useful” should be chosen and used consistently (where appropriate). For example:
 - On the participant evaluation, we asked participants what activities they most “enjoyed” but on the staff evaluation we asked the staff to evaluate how “valuable” the activities were to participants.
- The activities listed in the two evaluations were categorized differently. If we had asked participants and staff about the exact same activity categories, it would have been possible to better compare the answers.
- We asked participants to choose the two activities they enjoyed most, but asked staff to rate each activity on a subjective scale from not valuable to very valuable. In other words, staff rated each activity but participants chose two favorites without rating them.

Both participants and staff demonstrated confusion in counting the number of people attending the class, and the attendees' ages. It may not always be possible to collect this information consistently by questionnaire, but the questions could be improved.

- In the participant evaluation, we asked respondents to indicate the following information:

Today, I had these children of the following ages with me: (please fill in numbers)	
____ baby up to 1 year old	____ toddler(s) 1-2½ years old
____ child(ren) 2½ to 5 years old – preschoolers	____ school-age child or children

We wanted to know how many children each participant brought to class, and their ages (in the age categories provided). However, this question appeared to be misinterpreted by some participants. In some classes (especially Spanish language classes), several participants in each class filled in the total number of children in the class (“with them”) rather than just the ones they brought. Also, in some other cases, participants (apparently) filled in the ages of children rather than the number of children in the age category. Some participants filled in children’s ages and also checked the box “I had no children with me today.”

Additional data of interest, not included in the report:

- Over 80% of participants who brought a school age or preschool child considered their class very useful, and less than 2% found it not useful at all. On the other hand, about 8% of participants with a baby or toddler rated the class as not useful at all, and about 70% of them considered the classes very useful.
- For example:

<i>Age group of child(ren)</i>	<i>Rating by participants who brought children in the age group</i>	
	<i>Very useful to children</i>	<i>Not useful at all to children</i>
School age	86%	2%
Preschool	82%	1%
Toddler	70%	5%
Baby	69%	10%

The 5 a Day and Grow Your Own Garden classes followed this pattern, but the Grocery Shopping class departed slightly from this overall pattern in two ways:

1. Almost 10% of participants who brought school age children found the Shopping class not useful at all, compared to only 1% of those who brought preschoolers.
2. Participants who brought a baby were more likely to find the class very useful than those with a toddler, but they were also 3 times as likely (14%) to find it not useful at all.